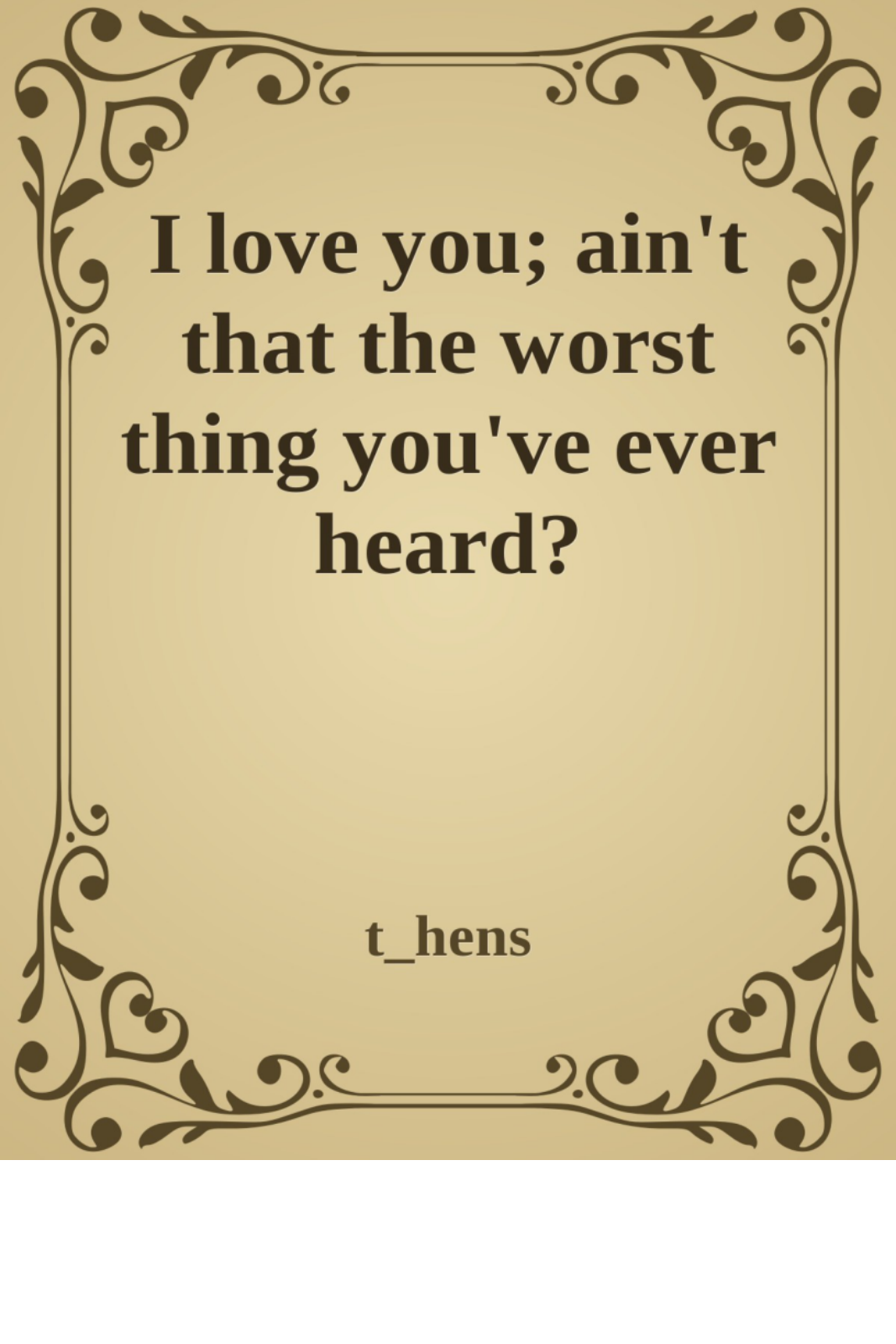




**I love you; ain't
that the worst
thing you've ever
heard?**

t_hens

I love you; ain't that the worst thing you've ever heard?

by t_hens

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Summary:

'Richie's whole life played before his eyes. A whole lifetime of always feeling like a piece of his body - his whole soul - was gone in a way he hadn't been aware of before he remembered. He wished he could forget again.'

But then he was dropping on to the rocks below and it hurt like a fucking bitch, but he didn't have time to think about that because Eddie was hovering over him - face alight with triumph - and Richie wasn't thinking twice before he was grabbing a hold of his shoulders and rolling them away, the grating sound of a claw on the rocks told him he'd been right.'

I love you; ain't that the worst thing you've ever heard?

Author's Note:

how many times can I write essentially the same story with slight variations? the limit does not exist

On some level, Richie knew he was dreaming. Well, dreaming was the wrong word. He knew he was caught in the deadlights, but that didn't stop Eddie's blood on his face and the sinking feeling that he was gone from feeling like it was real. Too real. Richie wanted to stay there down in the sewer with Eddie's body and die right along with him, because what was the point of living if he had to live with knowing there was no second chance for them?

Richie's whole life played before his eyes. A whole lifetime of always feeling like a piece of his body - his whole soul - was gone in a way he hadn't been aware of before he remembered. He wished he could forget again.

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After, when they had all showered off the sewer and dirt and quarry water off of them, they had gathered in the deserted lounge downstairs, each of them drinking from the bottle of the expensive liquor behind the bar. Richie was doing his best to tuck himself in to the corner of the couch, but Eddie was nestled by his side, sipping gingerly off a bottle of gin, while Bev sat between his legs. She was idly stroking Ben's hair where it curled out onto her thigh.

None of them had spoken much, content with each other's silence. Even Richie was being quiet, though every now and then he'd start twitching and Bev would gently squeeze his calf and Eddie would pat

the arm he was leaning against, both comforting him as if on instinct.

He couldn't remember the last time he'd felt so loved.

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Richie had nightmares that night, but not about the clown or any of the other scary shit that had happened in the past few days. It was more of what the deadlights had shown him; Eddie dying, Richie having to call and tell his wife who cried and blamed Richie and he didn't even disagree with her. He could have saved Eddie and he didn't, and he had to live with that for the rest of his life.

A tentative knock at the door is what pulled Richie from the nightmare's grasp. He shot up and out of bed, eager to wake up and get the lingering agony out of the pit of his gut.

Eddie was stood outside the door, hand raised to knock again, a sheepish smile on his face when Richie opened the door.

"Eds?" Richie asked, hoping he wasn't sleeping still and something bad was gonna happen.

"I couldn't sleep."

Richie thought he'd continued, but when he didn't, Richie stood aside to let him inside and he surprised him by crawling into bed.

Being speechless wasn't something he had a lot of experience with, so he decided to just go with it, and got into bed too. Eddie shifted until he was tucked into Richie's side like he had been on the couch, but this time he hooked his leg over Richie's thigh and sighed deeply, breath starting to even out almost instantly.

He stared down Eddie's sleeping body and he was certain he'd never felt something so pure and wonderful as he did knowing that he could bring Eddie some sort of relief. That he could make him feel better in any sort of way. His heart swelled like he was the Grinch, but saving Eddie was far more important than saving Christmas in Richie's opinion.

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The next morning, while everyone was crowding in the lounge gathering their bags, Richie pulled on the hem of Eddie's sweater until he followed him outside and got in his car wordlessly, picking up on the nervous energy Richie was exuding.

"Where are we going?" He asked after he'd broken the silence by bitching at Richie to put his seat belt on.

"I need to show you something."

"Okay, so not super vague or anything."

God, Richie wanted to kiss his stupidly cute, little smart ass mouth so bad it felt like an actual ache under his skin. Want for the man beside him felt like a physical layer beneath his skin; a constant itch he could never quite scratch.

Eddie's face twitched curiously as they pulled up to the kissing bridge, but he stayed silent as he followed Richie's lead and got out of the car and walked to the spot Richie was crouching down in front of.

His fingers scraped over the faded wood where the initials were just barely visible. "I did this when I was thirteen, at the end of that summer with It. You were running around with that stupid fanny pack and short shorts and cast, and I remember thinking there was no one braver in the whole world. I guess this was my way of trying to be brave like that, but I was really too chicken shit to do anything real about it."

Eddie's mouth was gaping at him, opening and closing in quick little bursts. He patted his pocket for the inhaler that he'd burned in the ritual and there was an edge of panic around his eyes, so Richie stood too quickly - his knees popping painfully, but he ignored them, gripping Eddie's shoulders and gave him a light shake.

"Hey, hey Eds. It's okay. I don't expect anything from you, I know you're married and all. I just wanted you to know. I don't think I could live with myself without telling you."

Eddie's eyes were still bugging so Richie took deep breaths, doing it

until Eddie joined him and his body started relaxing.

Richie dropped his hands to his side, wanting to fill the silence with a joke to cut through the tension and awkwardness, but his tongue felt like it was ten times too big for his mouth and he could really go for a fucking cigarette right now.

He shoved his fingers under his glasses and pressed hard enough on his eyes that he saw spots. Huffing out a deep breath, he started to turn towards the car so he could take them back to the townhouse and they could go their separate ways and Eddie never had to see him again.

A firm hand grabbed his wrist until he was bumping into Eddie's body and suddenly Eddie's hands were around his neck and pulling them together. The first meeting of their lips was too hard, Richie's teeth digging painfully into his lip as it bumped Eddie's mouth. It didn't take long for him to be distracted from the pain as Eddie adjusted his face until he could come back in, slow and gentle this time, and Richie thought he'd died and gone to heaven.

Eddie's lips were soft and tasted vaguely of the mint chapstick he always had in his fanny pack when they were kids. It reminded Richie of summers spent trying to shove himself close to Eddie through teasing and thinly-veiled flirting, desperate to be in his space and breathe in the fresh scent of the sensitive skin laundry soap Mrs. K used and the smell of mint.

There was a soft bite to his lower lip that snapped him back to the present and when the kiss broke, Richie tried to hide the whine he let out. Eddie kept them close, one hand curled around the back of his neck and the other clutched into his shirt like he thought Richie would run.

Their foreheads pressed together while they tried to drag air back into their lungs. Richie's back ached from hunching over and he scrambled for a short joke, but Eddie pressed another kiss to his lips before pulling away.

"I'm gonna have to go back to New York, at least for a day or two, but I don't want to be away from you. We've wasted twenty-seven

years, I don't wanna waste anymore time."

The words were music to Richie's ears and he didn't really know how to articulate that other than pretending to tip a hat and a told Eddie in a terrible rendition of a mobster voice and told him he'd always wanted to see the big apple.

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No one was particularly surprised when Richie and Eddie walked back into the townhouse holding hands, but most of them were tactful enough to not say anything. Everyone except Mike, who started crying and they had to spend ten minutes hugging him and having him tell them he was just so *happy* for them.

There were hugs and promises to text and call, something Richie found himself looking forward too, rather than how sad he felt about them having to leave each other so soon after reuniting. He would miss them all, of course he would, but Bill lived on the other side of LA and Bev had fashion contacts in San Francisco, which had her and Ben talking in low voices about building a house on the bay. Mike was going to travel and promised to head west soon. And best of all, after the necessary stop in New York, Eddie was going to come to LA with Richie, and though he loved his friends, he was more than ready to have some proper alone time with Eddie.

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Though Eddie hated flying, he'd agreed to flying into New York and to LA, but only because Richie told him he would spring for first class and he could just take a Xanax, have a glass of overpriced champagne and take a nap while they headed west.

They arrived in Eddie's soon-to-be former home state and headed straight to the hotel room they had booked for the rest of the week. It was only three days, and Eddie promised he was going to get as much as he could have done in that time so that he didn't have to come back often. He'd been on the phone with his boss and his lawyer almost the whole drive to the hotel, phone flashing every few minutes with another call or text from Myra that Eddie had been diligently ignoring all day.

While Eddie wrapped up his phone call, Richie dropped their bags and headed to the bathroom to start a shower. He would normally stretch out his shower from yesterday a few days longer, but Eddie had complained about airplane smells for half of the plane ride so Richie figured showering was a small sacrifice to get Eddie to cuddle him to sleep.

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The water was just a touch too hot, but it helped ease the ache in his shoulders and back from sitting for so long. He fucking hated getting old.

The bathroom door shutting made him jump, and before he could poke his head out of the shower and confirm it was only Eddie and not some other supernatural monster trying to kill him, Eddie was opening the steamed up glass door and shoving Richie out of the spray of hot water, hissing at the temperature.

“Why’s it so fucking hot?” He griped, as if he hadn’t barged into Richie’s shower.

“Should I be taking a cold shower?”

Eddie turned, water clinging to his eyelashes as he looked up at Richie, blinking innocently and crowding him up against the cold tile wall. His hand was trailing dangerously low and Richie caught it before it touched the place he was absolutely aching to be touched.

“I - you’re still married.”

Eddie gave him a thoughtful look and surged up to kiss him in a way that distinctly contradicted what Richie just said.

“I’ve been in love with you since I was eleven. My marriage has always been a sham and nothing more.”

Richie didn’t know about that, because he knew that in those years that he didn’t remember the losers, he spent all the extra time he had trying to fill the hole inside himself his friends had left behind. So even if their marriage hadn’t meant what it should have, that didn’t mean it meant nothing.

“I’m trying to save your virtue, Eds. Mine too.”

Eddie rolled his eyes but gave Richie a small smile and agreed, backing back into the spray. Part of Richie ached to pull him back in and finish what he was sure would have been the best night of his life.

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They showered and crawled into bed, Eddie situating himself till he was draped over Richie, a pleasant weight on his chest like the weighted blankets his therapist was always telling him to try. But Richie was fine with this compromise.

He slept better than he had in ages and when the sun shone through the blinds they forgot to shut, Richie wasn’t even grumpy. He woke up with a pep in his step that annoyed Eddie until he’d consumed an entire pot of black coffee.

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“Are you sure you want me to come with you?” Richie asked for the hundredth time since they got into the cab.

Eddie linked their fingers together and gave them a gentle squeeze. “You don’t have to come in if you don’t want, You can sit at the Starbucks on the corner if you want. I’ll just feel better knowing you’re near.”

That was easy to understand. Richie agreed and when they arrived at the neat block of upscale apartments, Richie was ready to bolt for the corner, but Eddie held his hand tightly, pulling their bodies together so he could nestle his face into Richie’s chest.

“Hey, it’s gonna be fine right? I’ll be right down the block and you don’t have to stay any longer than to get the things you need.”

They both knew it wasn’t that simple, but he nodded against the scratchy material of Richie’s flannel and gave him another squeeze before backing away. He leaned up to kiss Richie and just as their lips met, the door opened.

Myra Kaspbrak looked so similar to the late Mrs K that Richie had to do a double take. Judging by the look on her face, she didn't appreciate his presence and her bugged out eyes moved to Eddie, still wrapped around Richie.

"Eddie Bear? What's going on?"

Eddie took a deep breath before extracting himself from Richie's frozen form and started up their stoop.

"I need to talk to you about some things."

His voice was firm and left no room for arguing as he ushered her back into their home. Well, maybe not so much Eddie's home anymore.

That was the thought that carried Richie down the street, stepping into the overpriced coffee chain and ordering a too expensive drink that was just gonna notch up his anxiety.

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Eddie texted him forty-five minutes later, letting him know he was finished and was calling a car. Richie's long legs led him to where Eddie was standing on the curb, two suitcases at his feet.

"How'd it go?" He asked tentatively.

Eddie shrugged. He looked like he'd cried a bit, but his face had the same steely resolve he'd had when he took the fence post from Bev in the sewer: terrified but determined.

"I told her that I wasn't happy and I wanted a divorce. She said that I was going through a midlife crisis and that I should call my doctor. I told her I wasn't having a midlife crisis just that I'd finally realized what I needed to be happy."

"What's that?"

Eddie gave him an exasperated but familiar look: like he wanted to smack Richie upside the head but also kiss him.

“It’s you, moron.”

Richie's face flamed and he ducked his head, uncharacteristically shy.

“Oh. Same.”

Eddie just rolled his eyes again and wrapped an arm around Richie’s waist, giving him his own shy smile.

“You sure you’re prepared for this?”

He could have been referring to anything really, but Richie just nodded.

He could handle anything as long as he had Eddie.

Author's Note:

'This fic really ripped my heart out, stomped on it, and then glued it back together' - Moody's official review

you can find this fic on [tumblr](#)